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To: News Media Outlets Release Dates: Immediate Release

From: Karl von Hone and Erika A. Woods, Co-Chairs, Cape Cod Rabies Task Force

Date: September 21, 2015

Contact: Brian Bjorklund-USDA/APHIS-WS at 508-476-2715 or (cell) 413-537-9394 with questions or for additional information  
<http://www.barnstablecountyhealth.org/cape-cod-rabies-task-force>

Please put the following news release in the News Around Town section of your newspaper.  
Thank you.

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**INFORMATIONAL NEWS RELEASE:**

**Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccine Baiting Program:**

**Cape Cod Rabies Task Force Collaborate with United States Department Of  
Agriculture-Wildlife Services, Public Agencies and Volunteers to  
Reduce Raccoon Rabies on Cape Cod**

**Cape Cod, MA, September 18, 2015**—In cooperation with the Cape Cod Rabies Task Force (CCRTF), the United States Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services (USDA) is continuing to support the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccine (CCORV) Program to help reduce and eliminate raccoon rabies on the Cape. The Cape Cod ORV Program, which began in 1994, is praised as one of the longest running, increasingly successful projects to control rabies in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the CCORV Program was one of the many public health initiatives which lost its state funding. The USDA, as a direct result of commitments by the CCRTF, local communities and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, will continue to fund its portion of the ORV baiting. The Fall round of ORV baiting is set to begin the week of September 21.

In 2013, USDA shifted the bait zone west again bringing the ORV bait zone closer to the canal. The bait zone was shifted out of Orleans, Chatham, and 2/3 of Brewster and Harwich. Those resources were shifted west into Mashpee and Sandwich. This Fall, baiting will be shifted west to reflect a decrease in rabies cases on the Mid-and Outer Cape. Bait distribution will occur again in the towns of Bourne, Sandwich, Falmouth, Mashpee, Barnstable, Yarmouth, and a small section of Dennis near Chase Gardens Creek. This is the first time since 2004 that Falmouth and Cape-side Bourne will receive baits. Some of these towns will be baited by hand, some by stationary bait stations and some by both means of distribution. Hand distribution will occur September 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>. All 319 bait stations, which are stationed in wooded,

wetland, and/or town conservation areas, will be filled starting the week of September 21<sup>st</sup>. The stations will be checked over the following two weeks, and all remaining baits will be removed the week of October 12<sup>th</sup>. Remaining baits will be hand-distributed by USDA-WS employees in areas along the Canal October 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

When rabies first appeared in the state of Massachusetts in 1992, a group of concerned local, state, county and federal representatives started the Cape Cod Rabies Task Force to discuss and implement a protocol to keep rabies off of Cape Cod. In 1994 when the CCORV Program began, the CCRTF distributed Rabies Vaccine baits throughout towns surrounding the Cape Cod Canal. For over a decade, this program was successful in keeping rabies off the cape, using the canal as a natural barrier. Unfortunately, in March of 2004 the first terrestrial raccoon strain of rabies was discovered in Bourne. By 2006, rabies was found in every town across the Cape. For the next two years, portions of the Cape had been baited bi-annually in hopes of vaccinating as many animals as possible, in turn, protecting the wildlife and reducing the numbers of pet and human exposures to this potentially fatal disease.

The oral rabies vaccine is licensed for use by the USDA. The rabies vaccine is contained in baits that have a strong fish smell that is especially attractive to raccoons and unpleasant to humans. Raccoons that consume a vaccine-bait unit will be vaccinated against this fatal disease. Vaccine containing baits are distributed from cars along the roadside in wooded, brush covered, and wetland areas where raccoons are likely to find and eat them. Driveways, lawns, buildings, schools and agricultural fields are avoided. Studies have shown that most baits are eaten within four days and almost all baits are gone in one week. If baits are not found, the bait will dissolve, exposing the vaccine packet. Sunlight inactivates the vaccine quickly, as does exposure to air. Although, the vaccine will not harm domestic animals, people are urged to keep their dogs leashed to prevent them from scavenging the baits and vaccine packets. Humans who come into contact with the bait should dispose of them in brushy areas where children and dogs are not likely to find them and wash their hands thoroughly.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires people to vaccinate their dogs and cats for rabies to protect both animals and humans. People can also protect themselves from contracting rabies by following these simple guidelines: avoiding contact with wildlife or offering them food, disposing of food and trash properly, securing garbage cans tightly and reporting any wildlife behaving oddly to local health officials. Members of the public are advised to contact their local boards of health with any questions or concerns about vaccinating pets and the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccine Program.